



CALIFORNIA STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

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**Athletic Commission to conduct participant weight study****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****December 23, 2005****CONTACT:** Armando Garcia, Athletic Commission (916) 263-2195

SACRAMENTO – Weight concerns in full contact sports such as boxing and martial arts have grown exponentially in recent years. Both rapid weight loss just before an event and weight gains from weigh-in to bout time can pose severe health risks and create unfair advantages from one participant over the other.

Weigh-ins vary from commission to commission. The same is true for weigh-in procedures.

Generally speaking, weigh-ins are conducted the day before the event. However, some commissions have same day weigh-ins. This means that the parameters regarding weigh-ins across the country may be 1 to 30 hours or more.

A recent boxing article by a recognized Ringside Physician stated that the sport had not produced sufficient data to determine which was best for participants, weigh-ins the day before or weigh-ins the same day. The article also stated that there was also insufficient data on how much percentage of body weight was safe for participants to lose in the various weight classifications.

The article went on to say that in cases of moderate dehydration, it would normally take a participant a minimum of 48 to 72 hours to completely replenish their body fluid to normal levels. The problem is that most weigh-ins take place within 24 hours of the competition. So that may be a moot point.

The bottom line for the full contact sports' present situation is that there is insufficient data across the board and it is up to the more prominent state commissions to lead the way in protecting the athletes.

The danger of rapid weight loss in full contact sports is clear; it greatly promotes brain injury. But, how about huge weight gains in short periods of time? Any significant fluctuations in weight have unique health and safety implications.

There are many well documented cases, such as the professional boxing bout between Arturo Gatti and Joey Gamache on February 26, 2000. The boxers' weight differed by only one-half pound at the weigh-in (the night before the event), however, on the night of the event Gatti outweighed Gamache by three weight classes.

Boxers at Gatti's weight the night of the event are required to wear 10-ounce gloves. But, both wore 8-ounce gloves and Gamache suffered a severe knockout that ended his career and negatively affected his quality of life. He never fought again.

As a result, boxing experts concluded that the weight gain and the use of the lighter gloves greatly contributed to the outcome of the fight. This practice of weight loss and rapid weight gain has been a common ritual of Gatti and most boxers. The short and long term effects of changes in hydration and electrolyte fluctuations in the body are currently unknown.

Moreover, what also varies is the permissiveness (and dangerous practice) of commissions allowing participants to lose a certain amount of weight once they don't make weight at the official weigh-in. In essence, participants are given an environment that facilitates weight loss at the weigh in, to include the day of the event, without knowing how much weight the participant has already recently lost.

Most common to preliminary event participants, who are negotiating pay, this practice known as 'checking weight' usually entails a participant getting on the scale unofficially at the weigh-in, then going to negotiate his contract. He or she then loses or gains (usually loses) weight. 1 to 2 hours later the participant returns for the official weigh-in and if he or she is still not at the 'right weight', the commission usually allows him or her to then lose even more weight.

This practice may have been a contributing factor to a July 2005 boxing death. In that case the boxer did not make weight in the late afternoon weigh-in. He then went out in the hot sun under 105 degree heat in a sweat suit and began doing exercise that included jumping rope. He eventually made weight. The next night he collapsed after a bout and subsequently died.

The California State Athletic Commission (CSAC) is greatly concerned with these issues and practices. There are no easy answers or quick fixes.

Beginning January 1, 2006 the CSAC will conduct an internal study that will track weights for all participants. The CSAC will document the following weights:

- Official weight at weigh-in
- Pre fight the night of the event
- Post fight

The pre fight and post fight weights will not affect bout agreements.

The purpose of the study is to gather data prior to determining whether weigh-ins should be conducted 24 hours before the event or the day of the event; to gather data that may reveal weight loss and/or weight gain dangers to participants, and importantly, to establish health and safety policies.

These are all complicated issues that have far reaching implications as they affect not only athletes, but also event promotion.

To compliment this study the CSAC will continue to review weigh-in practices and maintain recent changes that include policies that strongly discourage weight loss close to the event and others that attempt to preserve the participant's health and safety.

Universities and Medical institutions wishing to assist in this study should contact Armando Garcia, Executive Officer at (916) 263-2195.